CLAIM AMENDMENTS

IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application or previous response to office action:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for operating a casting and rolling plant with at least one slab production line, at least one rolling mill train, and at least one slab feed device, which in manufacturing terms is independent of the slab production line, comprising the step of:

- during a pause in production of the slab production line when the slab production line is non-operational, the slab feed device ~~takes over the supply of~~ supplies slabs to the rolling mill train ~~to the maximum feasible extent~~ in accordance with logistical and/or production engineering stipulations.

2. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the slab feed device of the casting and rolling plant receives its slabs from a further slab production line which, together with the slab feed device, is responsible for supplying slabs to the rolling mill train ~~to the maximum feasible extent~~ in accordance with logistical and/or production engineering stipulations.

3. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the slab production line of the casting and rolling plant is designed as a thin-slab production line.

4. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 2, wherein the further slab production line is designed as a thick-slab production line which, together with the slab production line, is responsible for supplying slabs to the rolling mill train ~~to the maximum feasible extent~~ in accordance with logistical and/or production engineering stipulations.

5. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the slab feed device of the casting and rolling plant receives its slabs from a slab store in which prefabricated slabs are temporarily stored for manufacturing purposes.

6. (Currently Amended) A method for operating a casting and rolling plant comprising the steps of:

- providing at least one slab production line,

- providing at least one rolling mill train,

- providing at least one slab feed device, which in manufacturing terms is independent of the slab production line, and

- during a pause in production of the slab production line when the slab production line is non-operational, ~~taking over the supply of~~ supplying slabs to the rolling mill train ~~by~~ via the slab feed device ~~to the maximum feasible extent~~ in accordance with logistical and/or production engineering stipulations.

7. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 6, wherein the slab feed device of the casting and rolling plant receives its slabs from a further slab production line which, together with the slab feed device, is responsible for supplying slabs to the rolling mill train ~~to the maximum feasible extent~~ in accordance with logistical and/or production engineering stipulations.

8. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 6, wherein the slab production line of the casting and rolling plant is designed as a thin-slab production line.

9. (Currently Amended) The method as claimed in claim 7, wherein the further slab production line is designed as a thick-slab production line which, together with the slab

production line, is responsible for supplying slabs to the rolling mill train ~~to the maximum feasible extent~~ in accordance with logistical and/or production engineering stipulations.

10. (Original) The method as claimed in claim 6, wherein the slab feed device of the casting and rolling plant receives its slabs from a slab store in which prefabricated slabs are temporarily stored for manufacturing purposes.

11. (Currently Amended) A casting and rolling plant comprising:

- at least one slab production line,

- at least one rolling mill train,

- at least one slab feed device, which in manufacturing terms is independent of the slab production line, ~~and wherein the slab feed device comprises means that~~ to supply slabs to the rolling mill train during a pause in production of the slab production line when the slab production line is non-operational~~, take over the supply of slabs to the rolling mill train to the maximum feasible extent~~ in accordance with logistical and/or production engineering stipulations.

12. (Original) The plant as claimed in claim 11, further comprising a further slab production line, wherein the slab feed device of the casting and rolling plant receives its slabs from the further slab production line which, together with the slab feed device, is responsible for supplying slabs to the rolling mill train to the maximum feasible extent in accordance with logistical and/or production engineering stipulations.

13. (Original) The plant as claimed in claim 11, wherein the slab production line of the casting and rolling plant is designed as a thin-slab production line.

14. (Currently Amended) The plant as claimed in claim 12, wherein the further slab production line is designed as a thick-slab production line which, together with the slab

production line, is responsible for supplying slabs to the rolling mill train ~~to the maximum feasible extent~~ in accordance with logistical and/or production engineering stipulations.

15. (Original) The plant as claimed in claim 11, wherein the slab feed device of the casting and rolling plant receives its slabs from a slab store in which prefabricated slabs are temporarily stored for manufacturing purposes.

16. (New) A method for operating a casting and rolling plant comprising the steps of:

- providing at least one slab production line,
- providing at least one rolling mill train,
- providing at least one slab feed device, which in manufacturing terms is independent of the slab production line
- providing the slab feed device with thick slabs from a thick-slab production line, and
- during a pause in production of the slab production line, supplying the thick slabs to the rolling mill train via the slab feed device in accordance with logistical and/or production engineering stipulations.

17. (New) The method of Claim 16, further comprising:

- providing thin slabs from the at least one slab production line to the at least one rolling mill during a first production mode in which the at least one slab production line is operating; and
- providing the thick slabs from the at least one slab feed device to the at least one rolling mill train during a second production mode in which the at least one slab production line is not operating.

18. (New) The method of Claim 16, further comprising providing the at least one slab device with slabs from a slab store in which prefabricated slabs are temporarily stored.

19. (New) A method for operating a casting and rolling plant comprising:

- providing slabs to a rolling mill train using at least two slab production lines,
- stopping at least one of the at least two slab production lines;
- using a slab feed device to supply the rolling mill train only during a time the at least one slab production line is stopped.

20. (New) The method of claim 19, further comprising providing slabs to the slab feed device from at least a third slab production line.